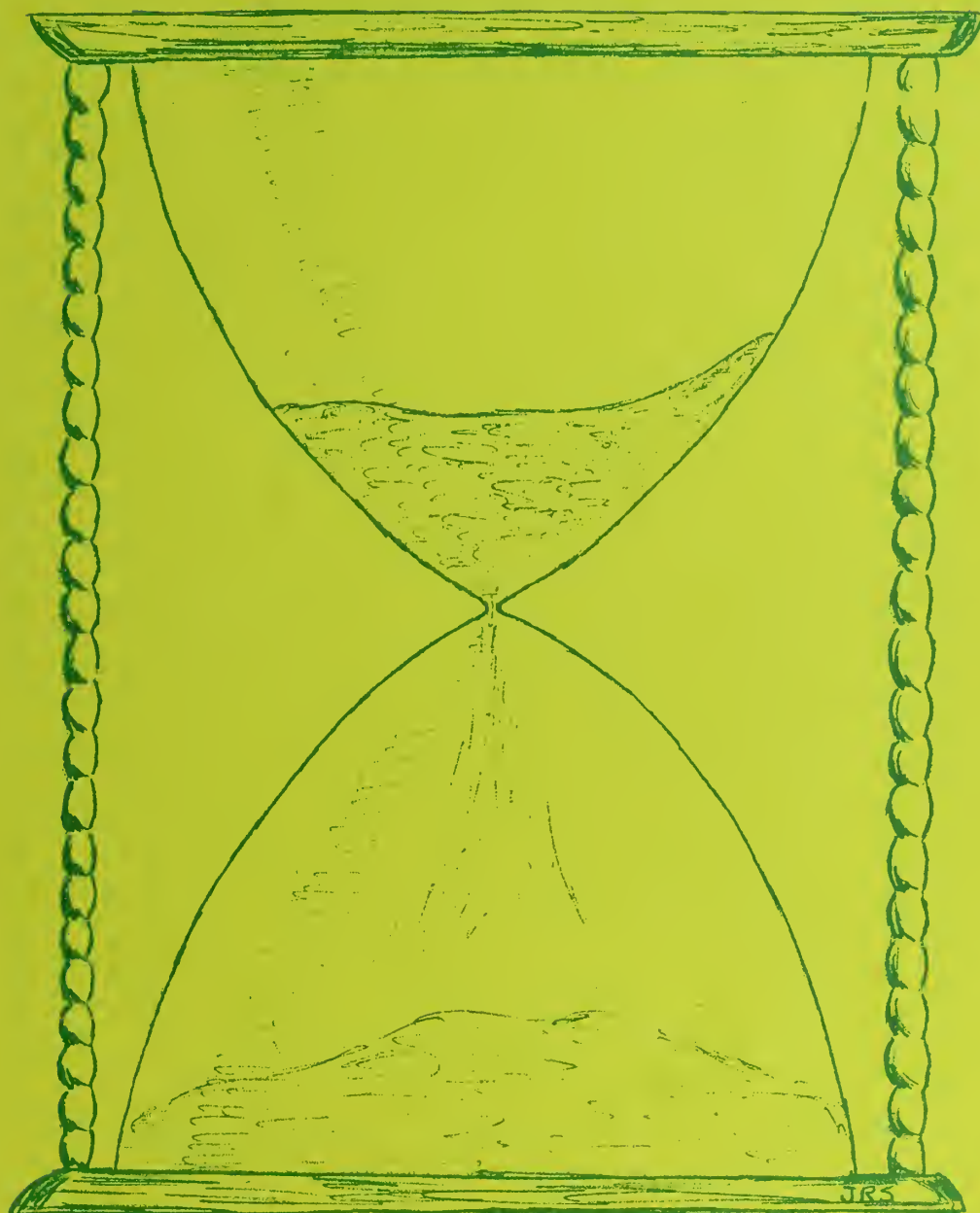
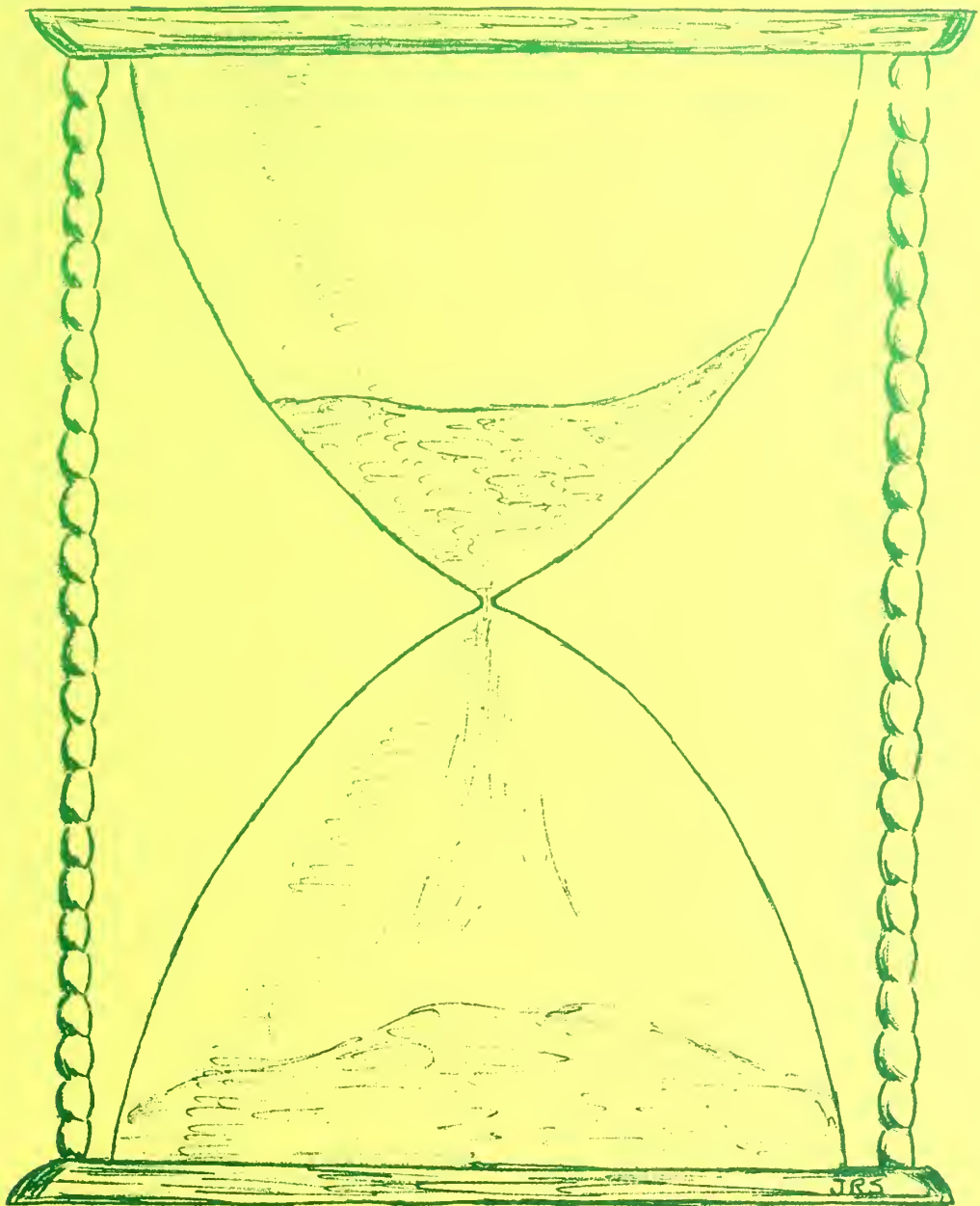


THE SEFER



THE SEFER

Spring 1974



***Volume 4
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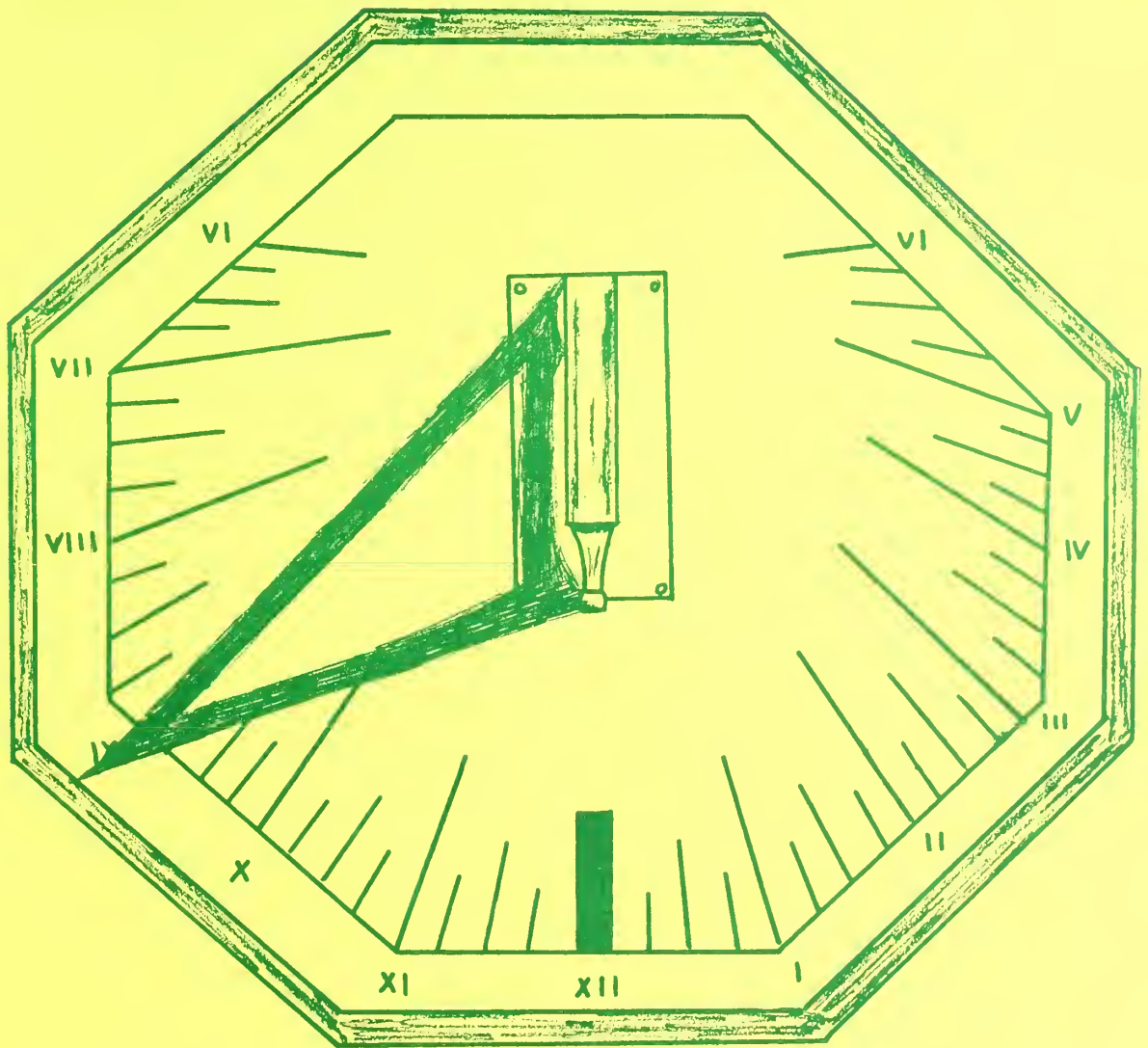
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I strive for things, I cannot obtain,
What they are, I cannot explain. Why?
I strive to have freedom in things of life.
I want to soar like a bird high in the sky
till my lungs would burst.
But then I fall, always fall back to reality,
into a deep abyss, almost smothered:
lonely.

GB



STUDENTS

LOVING YOU

Make me smile, Love,
And taste the wonder of life.
Teach me to cry, Love,
And know the beauty in tears.
Help me to know peace, Love,
And conquer my fears.

If loving you lets me be myself,

I will love with no bounds.

If loving you binds me,

The bond must be broken.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
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Mary E. Norris

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WRITTEN IN BIEN-HOA, SOUTH VIET-NAM

I am behind a hut,
between the time,
Of growing up,
and falling down

TO JASON, MY SON

When I cannot kiss you,
You must feel my kiss,
When I cannot touch you,
You must touch yourself.

You are here to become.
What you must become.
Above all,
Love with your eyes.

UNTITLED

The changes I have been,
Were often never seen,
From son to father wasn't far,
Little there between.

Arriving in a black sedan,
Sun and stars attending,
I became a loving man,
Manhood thus defending.

But who, O God, decides these things,
Are we all to move,
As in a bizarre happening,
Thirsting for a love?

Is each man a simple part,
Of somewhere's lonely thoughts,
Or do we own a meaning,
All unto ourselves?

Changing then is good or bad,
Even words are fools,
We can't yet tell ourselves,
What we overrule.

Poets' minds and science's past,
Have neither loved nor answered,
Simple human mysteries,
Watch a Tango dancer.

Thomas M. Braun

I AM A POET

I am a poet because the poetry of my universe surrounds me; and when I am quite alone, I feel confident enough to reach out and claim parts of the poetry for my own.

Seasons are the meter for my poem. Rolling ocean waves and winds of every sort are the rhythm of the universe. The sounds of nature are the rhymes of the poem.

There are no half-rhymes in nature, because all things blend in perfect harmony, be it the chirping of birds or the sound of a cricket followed by a roll of thunder. The sighing wind, the sweeping snow, and the splash of waves on the shore are nature's alliteration. A field of blackened branches leaning on supportive air is a connotation of the vibrant green forest that stood there before lightening struck.

I look at the stars above my head on a clear night, and I see a synecdoche. The stars I can see are but a part of the whole of the universal pattern of galaxies. The ripples that shine in the sunlight beaming on a river are a mere understatement of the surging current that lies beneath the surface of the water.

A sobbing mother mourns the loss of her child. Her cries are a metaphor, for they are the sorrows of the world. Indian summer days are similes. They are like the days of summer that have gone before. A flower grows and is to me a symbol of the Creator's love. I take the beauty that is that flower and place it in my heart. I am a poet because I make the universe a poem.

I am a poet because I live poetry. The routines I follow from day to day are the meters of my activity. Some days the meter is regular, on other days my life seems to me blank verse. My moods cover a scale of poetic voices from the soft and sensitive to the gay and frolicsome. My heartbeat and my breathing are the meters of my existence, and my movements are the rhythm in the poem that is I.

I am a poet because I write poetry. Poetry is one way I have to express thoughts and ideas that seem important and special to me. If I could paint, perhaps my poetry would be colors on a canvas. If I wrote music, perhaps my poetry would be melodies floating in space. If I could dance, perhaps my poems would be graceful movements. But since I am I, I write when a thought wells up inside of me and demands to be set free.

Sara L. Sanders

LIFE IS DEATH

The vine doth entangle the tree
Just as days doth entangle our lives—
Enveloping. . . .Strangling
Until—just as the tree must decay
 So must life go away

Sharon Bergold

“THE USELESS YEARS”

There are those who breathe and eat
That have long since passed away;
They have no place on God’s green earth
Yet on the earth they stay.

In many—storied concrete tombs
Buried in careers,
Their futile efforts day by day
Fill up the useless years.

There is nothing left for them to take
And nothing left to give,
Though they exist a thousand years
They know not how to live.

—Cheryl Black

There are times
When you awake
in the morning, you feel
you must touch
someone, something.
You derive within
yourself a
need to feel,
to touch; you
feel you can really
give yourself unto—
whomever or whatever. . .
It’s like fire, and you
draw back—
again—
again—
alone.

“Die”

COUNTRY LIFE. . . (In India)

Early in the morn
I hear the shepherd's horn;
The cackling of the geese,
The whistling of the air thro' the trees.

Birds chirp all the day
Dew on the flowers comes to stay;
The murmur of the river brook,
Reflections giving it a glassy look.

Green trees and the mountains brown,
Look beautiful when the sun goes down.
Farmers toil all day in the field,
For their dependent families to shield.

Life here is wholesome and pure,
Makes a person healthy and secure.
And it is such delight,
To behold such a lovely sight.

Edgar Menezes

"IN SUMMER"

Dark falls fast in summer,
After the long hot day,
Changing the bright warm blue of the sky
Into a clear cool gray.
Wrapping the world in silence
Under the glow of the moon,
An early supper, then early to bed;
In summer the dawn comes soon.

Cheryl Black

YOUTH

Youth,
How fond I am of Youth—
Envy.
Those simple carefree days,
Of truthful, natural ways,
Of endless hours of play,
Gone by. . .

Truth,
Let's talk a while on Truth—
Grow old.
And constant covered lies,
In nervous fleeting eyes,
And time—worn alibis,
You'll find.

Time,
The blind, cruel march of Time—
I'm tired.
The brain a loaded bowl,
With fuses from my soul,
Burn thoughts that take their toll,
On Me.

Soul,
The core of man, his Soul—
His life.
Put here to help it grow,
Or just a one—time show?
Too late I may just know,
In Death.

Death,
Our lives will lead to Death—
Eternal?
With all that I can see,
A mind with thoughts so free,
Will I truly never Be.
Again?

Free,
To run, to live while free—
Return.
To hearts that have their way,
To wonders Old can't say,
To a child, and to the days,
Of Youth.

H.F. Boroni

TO A ROBIN

My feelings toward you have changed
little if any at all,
Yet my mind often wonders if you
were really interested in being left
alone, or content in being rid of me.

Knowing that you would rather not
be bothered with the petty wimperings
of my mind I'll keep them to myself,

To reach out to you could only separate
us more, yet to not reach out at all—
is to let you depart from me.

With you I felt seldom understood,
seldom if at all believed, and even
less cared for,
Knowing all this I would still gladly love
you with all my heart, body and
soul.

Feeling that love which I so desperately
need drift slowly away is to torment
my soul more times over,

But to watch it drift away, because
any attempt to hold your love would
only divide us further, is more than
torment, more than heartache, it seems
a haunting pain of sin.

I let your love slip away, so that
I may hold onto you forever.

Herbert Johnson, Jr.

"THE EXPECTANT MOTHER"

My arms ache with the need
 to hold you tight.
I think about you all day long
 and in the night.
I tremble when I think
 that you will soon be here.
The thought that you won't want me
 fills my heart with fear.
Even though we've never met,
 I know you.
I haven't even seen you, yet ---
 I love you.

Cheryl Black

"MY FIRST LOVE"

Tomorrow is your wedding day
And I will be there, watching and smiling
And remembering that you were my first love.
Remembering how blindly innocent
Were our unkept vows to one another.
We had such high ideals,
Such beautiful thoughts:
We were right about every thing,
Except each other.
So tomorrow is your wedding day,
And I will be there, watching.
The tears I shed won't be for you, my friend.
But for the particular passion which I felt,
that I'll never feel again.

Cheryl Black

TIME

Time constantly grows ill.
And most of yond'r years
Have been filled.
As earth grows old'r and Senil'
The "Son of Man" is soon to come.
Then shall Time, no longer run—
But be stilled.

Addie R. Fulton

LIFE

Life,
A pool
Of water
Wrestled
By the wind.

Soon the wind
Shall come to rest
And the pool
Will be wrestled
NO MORE.

Addie R. Fulton

THE ENGLISH TEACHER. . .

“The best way to compare these two periods (maybe if I talk his arm off he won’t notice I haven’t said a thing) is to compare two poets or writers and their work.”

“And now we remove our parts to other parts.” (Perhaps I should have thought of that when I could still drop this course.)

“The basic attitude of writers in the Renaissance was emotional and optimistic (some-what more optimistic, I must say, than mine concerning this quiz) whereas, the writer in the Age of Reason leaned more toward the intellect and logic with a hint of cynicism.” (Oh, my poor grade!)

“In Swift’s ‘Modest Proposal’, the author is writing with his tongue firmly imbedded (with an ‘i’ or an ‘e’ ?) hope he doesn’t count off for spelling) in his cheek and words best described as biting, pouring forth at 4000 rounds per minute. Whereas Ben Jonson’s tongue is dragging the ground for his Celia and leaving one more obstacle for the reader to trip over. . .” Which, through the grace of God and with the help of the guy sitting next to me, is the correct answer. Next?

Conceived, written and produced
by the Infamous Trapper John
and things that go bump in the night.

“SHELIA”

It's six o'clock, the sun is going down.
Shelia's getting ready to go to town.
Shelia's walk is as foxy as her face,
Shelia's lucious body moves with grace.
There's a bad war going on in Vietnam;
Sweet young Sheila doesn't give a damn.
Inflation's getting higher all the time,
A dollar isn't even worth a dime.
But Sheila's not concerned with high finance;
She rarely gives the Daily "News" a glance.
Downtown, sweet Sheila's very much admired,
The pleasure of her company much desired.
The mayor says crime is getting out of hand.
Disease and drugs are ruining the land.
But don't tell Sheila; she'll just smile and say,
"I'll make all your troubles go away."

Cheryl Black

“HEY, LITTLE GIRL”

Hey, little girl,
Why are you crying?
Somebody treat you wrong?
Has somebody lied,
somebody cheated,
somebody s trung you along?

Hey, little girl,
Why are you crying?
Somebody broken your heart?
I guess you thought
a shining knight
would come to take your part.

Hey, little girl,
Why are you crying?
You in some kind of a jam?

Hey, little girl,
Why are you crying?
Nobody gives a damn.

Cheryl Black

“ONWARD TO DEFEAT”

I have felt again the horrid moment
in time which I had hoped I'd never
again know,

face to face, it was there like a mirror
of terror reflecting a past I'd
thought gone,

I became shocked and confused,
riddled with thoughts which had once
befuddled my mind,

My soul cried out with words of
despair through great pain and
agony from the sight which was
there,

It was as if I was living a dream
Only the places, and people had changed,
But no dream was I having. This
nightmare was real, more so than
I feared it to be,

Only this time the outcome would
be different, for I would not just
step aside and be crushed by the fist
which destroyed my world in a time once before,

This time I shall not retreat. I shall
fight for the love which I must
have.

Though my oppressor seems unbeatable
and his victory evident, I shall
challenge his strength through the
strength of my love.

My days of this love are numbered—
but I march onward to a more
glorious defeat.

I may lose, but I struggle still—
to hold love as long as my heart
holds hope. . . .

Herbert Johnson, Jr.

PRAYER

It's just me, God.
You remember,
Just insignifecant me.
The one you, seemingly,
Placed on Earth,
Not as a object of beauty,
But as a distributor
of Understanding,
of Love,
of Patience,
of Compassion.
The one who's always coming to you in Prayer because
People are frightened because I understand them;
People take my love and hoard it, never giving me at least
 an equal amount in return;
People use every ounce of my patience and expect me to have a
 reserve tank;
People misuse my compassion.
O, God,
Give me more of each.
Let me find someone who longs to be understood and will try to understand
 me in return.
Show me someone who realizes—that I'm only human and doesn't think it's
 funny to try my patience day—in and day—out.
Lead me where my compassion will produce results.
O, God,
Please renew me.
Guide me.
Understand me.
Have pity on me.
Love me, Please.

R.R.

“SUMMERTIME”

“Summertime, when the livin’ is easy. . .” is definitely a song that takes me back to the summertimes of my childhood.

I need only to close my eyes to feel and remember things as they were then. It would be after supper. My brothers and I would be sitting in the old swing on the front porch. Their great fun for the moment was letting a mosquito bite, watching him swell to red fullness, and killing him just as he was ready to fly on. It was the time we called “evening.”

About then Momma and Daddy would walk out and suggest we go down to the front beach. (In later years I learned the beach did have a name—an appropriate one, White Point Beach in fact, but then it was always “the front beach” to all of us local people). Sometimes we drove in our old car; more often we preferred to walk. It was the perfect distance for a family stroll, about two blocks. The beach itself bordered Charleston Harbor. It was miniature size, with a couple of very old docks leading out into the water. We could feel it was almost our own little beach; we never encountered another soul there.

As soon as we got to the sandy part, Daddy would stop us all with the command, “Now take some deep breaths and get some good fresh salt air in your lungs.” We always obeyed, and I could feel myself becoming healthier, it seemed, immediately! Then we spread out to find the bird egg nests hidden so well in the sand and along the marsh. We’d call to each other excitedly at each find, and scurry over to examine them all. Momma and Daddy always cautioned us not to get too close to the eggs and not to touch them, as the mother bird would never return. The little eggs were truly beautiful. Each time we went there we’d count all the nests left, until they had all hatched. The shrieking parent birds could be heard somewhere overhead; they were so afraid we were going to harm the eggs.

With our egg count over, we’d beg to go wading in the edge of the water, and to walk out on the old docks. We’d watch the shrimp trawlers coming in with the day’s haul, and then Momma would urge Daddy to get us on home, as it was getting late.

So, as the twilight deepened, and after a few more good gulps of air, we’d turn for home. Along the way Daddy would pull out his handkerchief for the boys to try to catch lightning bugs. (I thought they were beautiful, but I didn’t want to get close.)

We seemed always to reach home just in time to have a “last tag” contest with the children across the street. With a “got cha’ last!” ringing in our ears, we’d run for the front door. A little later we’d go to sleep with the sounds of the tug boats tooting in the harbor. To this day whenever I hear a train whistle at night I automatically get an warm feeling, for to my sleep—benumbed brain, the sound is always reminds me of the welcome warm sound of a tugboat in summertime.

June Fischer

TO CHARLESTON

There is a charm in old wood and brick
Formed into great houses
In coastal Towns
Where sea smells burst
Within our thoughts
And make a moment true.

Walking through gas—lit times,
Glancing at our own ghosts,
Military men with swords and gloves.
Porcelain and lace,
And humor and grace, now lost
In glass and wood cases, on display.

Artifacts and delicate words
Once alive on warm southern nights,
When candles glowed
In rooms of beige and gold,
And windows opened to the lovely sea.

A pace of leisure and respect—
A gentle, smooth, and quiet life
When tinkling crystal made a test
For soft piano's tenderness.

Thomas M. Braun

"TO A LOVE"

Here, striped I lie, yet feeling no
shame, for I am comforted by
my soul as it is so deeply engaged,
My mind sips gently from the thoughts
of love which it has so tenderly
retained.

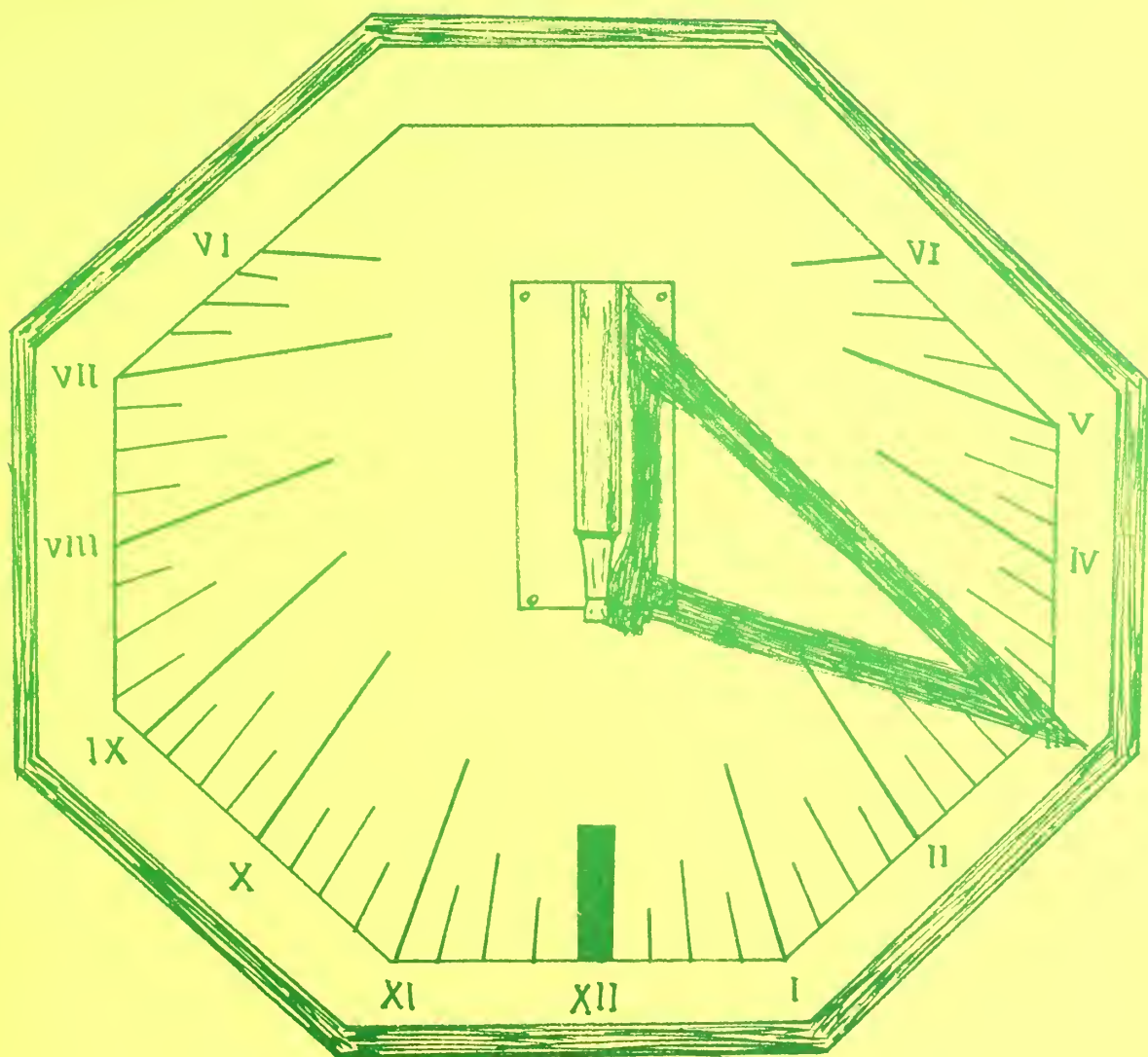
No hatred toward you do or should I
feel, only an emptiness which is so
very real. Though in time this too
will pass and when it does I'll still
have whispering dreams of your love.

If never we love each other again
that bond which we once had will
Always linger on in each of us
forever.

Love is not just a word—its an
emotion of the heart, mind, and
soul,

Once we loved each other. . .
Now we only love.

Herbert Johnson, Jr.



FACULTY and ALUMNI

DUFFY'S PARROT

When the church burned down, Mike Duffy went to Parson Hollister. "Parson," said Mike, "I feel constrained to do me Christian duty in this here emergency. Sure and you're welcome to use the barroom of me tavern as a meeting place for the congregation until other arrangements can be made."

Parson Hollister was not one to fly in the face of providence. He had lived in the hills long enough to know better than to look a gift horse in the mouth. He accepted so fast that it appeared he was afraid Duffy might change his mind. He didn't even insist as a part of the deal that Duffy attend the services, although he invited him most cordially to do so.

Now Duffy was the owner of Duffy's Tavern, as anyone in the hills would know. Duffy owned a parrot that was the talkingest bird this side of kingdom come. Saturday night at Duffy's Tavern being what it is, that bird was asleep in his cage in the barroom when the congregation assembled on Sunday morning. In fact, the parrot didn't awake until the choir burst forth into the first hymn.

As the sound of the hymn continued to beat at him the sleepy parrot ruffled his feathers and opened one eye. Cocking it in the general direction of the choir, the parrot said,

"Well bless my brass buttons, a new chorus line. Not bad either."

Since the hymn was just ended, Parson Hollister rose to deliver the prayer. Looking at him with one open eye, the parrot said,

"A new master of ceremonies, I see."

The parrot ruffled his feathers again and opened both eyes to peer out into the congregation. He shook his head in disappointment.

"Same old crowd," he said.

Dr. Robert Carroll

BUTTERFLY

I am butterfly!
Beauty more than the world may buy.
I am butterfly!
Am I too frail to fly?
I am butterfly!
Born to live but soon to die --
I am butterfly!
Must I face the world with a sigh?
No! I am butterfly!
Upon my wings rests God's
glorious sky!

James H. Edmondson
Prof. Business Administration

GIN & SPRITE, JULY 1970

I wander in a valley
of mist where only grief
and the wailing of
damned souls dwell.

God is gone,
Love is gone,
rising in their place
are cathedrals of darkness.

Oh God! My God,
let me touch thy face.
Come to me, for
I am dead
in a far and distant land.

My passions have laid
waste to my spirit and
meloncholy and loneliness
roll over me
like an October fog
over the marsh.

Nothing works out for nothing.
In the end
each of us stands utterly alone
to meet our destiny.

Come to me,
Jesus! God!
How I loath the Night!

L.W.

THE CHOCOLATE–MUSTARD–GREEN–WAFER KID OR VOICES FROM THE MINOR CONQUEST
OF A LESSER WORLD, ELECTION EVE, NOVEMBER, 1968

He's a Marine
Eat up with the stupidity
How can I make you
understand I love you

God is an American
God is a Democrat
God is Black
God is White
I need you

Napalm the enemy
God is Love
Kill a Commie for Christ!
Come let us reason together –
Please let me love you.

Pray, pray for Bobby.
The Eagle has landed
Delux model – no payment
until next February
I'll die without you

I've been to the mountain——
And there was light
instinctively serving the darkness.
“Ask not what your country
can do for you”
I hate you——

Burn the boats on
the beach——
We're going inland
Why did I love you?

I walk in other dreams
now—
better dreams——

For I am
Wednesday's Child. . . .

THE QUEST

I wandered in a lofty mountain upland,
Alone and lost within a world of peaks,
Seeking the answer to an ancient riddle,
To find the God of whom the prophet speaks.

Hear me, Oh God, I spoke in supplication.
Speak Thou the Words that I so long to hear.
Send Thou Thy voice across the mighty valleys.
Let the Great Message thunder in my ear.

Long have I cried, and long have sought the answer.
Long is the road, and longer still the quest.
Give me the long sought answer to my riddle.
And help my weary soul to find its rest.

God of my fathers, Thou, the Mighty Maker,
Lord and Creator, of those who walk the earth,
What is the reason Thou has made my being?
What is the hope for which I had my birth?

Speak now, Oh God, in voice of rolling thunder,
Speak in the storm from out the lofty peaks.
Shake Thou the earth, tear down the ancient mountains,
And let me know in chaos that God speaks.

The lightning flashed, then came the roll of thunder.
The world was lost in rage of wind and rain.
Battered and hurt beyond the power of feeling,
I listened for the voice of God in vain.

Through all the endless night of storm and chaos,
I cried in vain to God to hear His voice.
Oh, Thou Almighty, speak above the thunder,
Speak Thou, Oh God, and let my heart rejoice.

The mighty storm was ended with the morning.
The sun and mist had turned the peaks to gold.
The voice of God came in a gentle whisper,
Be not afraid, but let your heart be bold.

The night of storm and strife did naught to harm you,
The soul is cleansed in flood of pain and strife.
The heart is made the stronger by enduring,
And in the cleansing storm, there is new life.

Your riddle is no riddle any longer.
The voice came light as voice of fairy elf.
What is the reason I have made your being,
Know thou, My Son, I have made you for Myself.

Dr. Robert Carroll

GIFTS OF GOD

O what a grim world this would be
And ourselves naught but asses,
If God in His wisdom did not see
How dearly we need the lasses!

Our pride would lead us far from grace,
Our power wilt the flowers—
Were we not gentled by half our race
With surer hearts than ours.

The noonday sun would burn us up,
Night drag us down—
Were there no women to sweeten the cup
With voices of silver sound.

Take, O Lord, from this sorely tried earth
Frankincense, myrrh, and gold,
But leave these gifts of infinite worth
—Thy daughters young and old.

LENT

April in England, April in Paris
Are grander, I would suppose—
Had I not seen our April reduce
The airs of theirs to prose.
But when azaleas with soft-petaled goods
Of purple and red are calling,
And dogwood are whitening our woods
Like snow transfixed in falling,
Whose heart so favored could embarrass
The Aprils of England or Paris?

Dr. Jim Rivers

FROM HERE TO MT. OLYMPUS

by Slim Chance

A recent widely circulated article stated that the number of authors who eat regularly solely as a result of their writing is a couple of dozen. While this may be slightly exaggerated, it is probably true that the number of those who become successful (that is, make over a thousand dollars a year) in a writing vocation is quite small. It has been proven statistically that playing the ponies brings one a much steadier income than does writing. This can be explained, I believe, by the fact that a lot of people write (and who does not these days) who should not. Some insist that this occurs because it is not possible to determine who should and who should not make efforts to become successful writers.

This distinction is more readily discovered, I believe, than one might think. Simply stated, writing is a calling just as any of the other higher professions, such as medicine, acting, or blacksmithing. Incidentally, three ex-writer friends of mine have decided to make this latter calling their own since it is a more open and lucrative field than writing. The real solution, however, lies in hearing clearly and heeding tenaciously this call. Bearing this in mind, the would-be writer need only be sure the bells are tolling for him and that they are not simply bats in his belfry.

Perhaps a personal testimonial will clarify this theory for any aspiring writers.

My story begins on an early spring day of five years ago when I definitely decided to become a writer myself. The entire course of my life was altered permanently and drastically by that decision. And let me assure any scoffers that this was not an impetuous commitment. I had received overtures from my Muse several times before this, but I had steadfastly refused to heed her beguiling voice. On that particular morning, however, her voice, straight from Mt. Olympus itself, wafted into the small southern town haberdashery where I had worked for more years (such wasted years) than I care to remember, and filled my soul with the overwhelming, irresistible, uncontrollable desire to become a writer. As I stood there entranced, the rich Greek accent of her voice spoke to me of, among other things, some of the rewards inherent in this hallowed profession: self-expression, fame, and wealth.

As I thought of her promises to me, the first one, self-expression, immediately filled me with a consuming passion to put down for all the world to read my finest thoughts and feelings which, her reassuring voice insisted, would enrich society and ennoble myself. The second promise, fame, I decided I would accept only if it were thrust upon me. The third promise, wealth, I immediately dismissed from my mind as being a crass blasphemy which my Muse had interjected to test my true motives. Such a mundane promise I found completely repulsive to my artistic sensitivity.

Having no doubt, however, that the voice of that one from lofty Olympus's peak was entirely real, and believing her promises implicitly, I set about my task with a dedication known only to those who feel the world's needs tugging at their literary heartstrings. I have always been very punctual in my labors, and the thought of keeping the world ignorant of my literary **savoir faire** was very disturbing to my altruistic nature; so, I asked for the afternoon off from the haberdashery and went home that very day to harness my surging talent and set my pen flying as swiftly as Mercury bearing a message for Zeus.

The first effort of my literary acumen (which, incidentally, took me all that afternoon to write) was a fresh and original short story about a boy and girl falling in love. This boy and

girl had lived next door to each other all of their lives. But only rarely did they notice one another as their paths crossed day after day. One day, however, the boy was out pitching a baseball against the side of his house when it missed the house and went into the yard next door where the girl was lying demurely in a hammock shelling butter beans in shorts (she was in shorts) and knocked the whole pot full of beans onto the soft, green, well-cut grass. The gallant lad flew over and with profuse apologies began picking up the beans he had spilled among the daisies. The girl, however, was as mad as a honey bee in a molasses mill, and she turned up her already tip-tilted nose, and stamped her pretty feet into the house, leaving the befuddled boy holding the beans. The next day he called her and got a date for that Saturday night, and two months later they were married and lived happily ever after in a vine-covered cottage where all they had to do was reach out the window and pick butter beans---off the vines covering the cottage, of course.

After carefully polishing every facet of this little gem, I sent it off to a well-known national magazine and waited (with bated breath) for word of its acceptance to come in. Meanwhile, back at the typewriter, I began my next story. The only thing that worried me while I waited for the check for the first story was how to appear sophisticated (since I am by nature a very unassuming person) as do all professional writers when they are photographed. For I knew the local press (I felt I was not yet ready for national acclaim) would come to do an article on the Muse in their midst.

Having decided to be completely cool about it, I began practicing various and sundry types of blase expressions, from contemptuous disdain to condescending amity. As I was rehearsing some of these expressions before my bathroom mirror one morning, the door bell rang. I wondered how the paper had found out so quickly about my success when I had not yet received my check from the magazine to which I had sent my story. I knew, however, that newsmen have secret sources, so I went blasely to the door. It turned out to be the mailman with a large envelope with thirty cents due on it --the exact amount I had put on my story when I first sent it off. I paid the postman reluctantly enough and eagerly opened the envelope to find- -my story.

My Muse had warned me that not everyone would recognize my gift right off, so I was not too badly discouraged. After all, self-expression had been uppermost in my thoughts, and I had expressed myself. The best part of this, I discovered in days ahead, was in telling those editors whose minds were obviously on the more materialistic things of life just what I thought of them. But then, I'm getting ahead of myself.

Next I expressed myself in a rather exotic (if I do say so myself) mystery story with complex plot, distressed heroine, reluctant hero, oodles of hoodlums, and a surprise ending. The plot was something like this: there was this tired, lonely man whose girl had rejected him because he didn't have any backbone, she said (and she was a lady doctor). So, he goes into a park to rest his dejected frame and feed the friendly pigeons. As he sits there worrying about his ulcers and lack of backbone, a beautiful blonde in a tight black satin dress comes and sits beside him. As he watches this pigeon, she tells him from the well-shaped corner of her mouth to pretend not to be talking to her (which he wasn't anyway). Then she goes on to tell him that she is being pursued by a band of spies carrying violin cases filled with machine guns. They are after her, she corner-mouthedly confides, because she has the plans for an atomic moon rocket in a false tooth in the other corner of her mouth. Then she flings her arms around him, kisses him, gives him the false tooth and runs off into the mist from whence she had come. The hero sits there calmly feeding the pigeons until the band with the heavy instruments begins to chase the blonde. Then, as the hero gets up to yell a warning to her, the false tooth drops from his mouth, and a favorite

pigeon of his, a tumbler with pink eyes (so it could be identified easily throughout the story) picks up the tooth, thinking it was a grain of corn. By this time, the band of spies (sometimes called agents) realized they had been duped and began chasing the hero who is now chasing the pigeon (the one with pink eyes not blue ones). Their pursuit leads them on quite a wild pigeon chase, and the trail doubles back many times, of course, since the pigeon was a tumbler.

Meanwhile, the girl gets the police, the police get the band (which, as it turns out, was just musicians trying to get the girl to sing with their outfit), and the hero gets the bird (the one with pink eyes, not the one with the well-shaped corner of a mouth). He was so soft-hearted, however he refused to kill the pigeon (which somehow reminded him of himself), so the blonde left him in utter disgust and disappointment for the same reason the lady doctor had. As the story ends, the hero goes with the pigeon to have an x-ray made to see if the capsule is still in the bird, and to see also if there is anything to the suspicions of his last two girl friends about his inner self.

So much for two of the better examples of my writing.

I had been humbled enough by my first rejection slip to decide not to practice blase expressions until the reporter actually came around. However, I did practice just one before answering my doorbell the week after I had sent off my mystery story. It was the postman again. I soon got to know whenever it was him: he always rang twice.

After several months of this quite monotonous sort of thing, I began to suspect that the editors to whom I sent my manuscripts were not just being coy. Then it was that I developed no mean skill in the aforementioned art of self-expression. (I had read somewhere that if you tell editors off, most of them will greatly respect you, even if they don't buy your manuscripts. Thus, I began to be one of the most widely respected writers anywhere). Sure enough my luck began to change little by little. And lest some cynics think the writer has no rewards (other than self-expression, of course), I would like to affirm that such is decidedly not the case. And if anyone is getting the idea that my Muse pulled a ruse, then just read on; for my writing soon began to pay rich royalties.

The first really tangible reward of my literary strivings came about six weeks and twelve rejection slips (I had by now had time to receive two rejects per story) after I had taken pen in hand to fulfill my manifest literary destiny. It happened this way. Next door to the haberdashery, where I was still employed, there is a newsstand. One day I happened to be in there and, having now become keenly aware of literary things, I noticed a digest-type book on the rack which listed many plots, advice, markets, agents, etc. for writers. So I began each day at lunch time to read a little bit of it right there at the stand since my spare change had of late dwindled rapidly (the mailman, you know.) After two weeks of this, the sale girl became very irritated with me, snatched the book from my hands and hit me over the head with it several times. I didn't feel a thing, though, because when I saw the fire in her otherwise cool blue eyes, my heart melted, my glasses fell to the floor and broke into smithereens, and I asked her for a date which she adamantly refused to give me. Three weeks later, however, we were married--in the best traditions of romantic plots which I felt was a good omen for my success as a writer. After we were married she bought me a subscription to the digest-type magazine with the plots, markets, etc. (I was often tempted to try one of those agents who advertise, but my non-literary minded wife refused to allow this, claiming that she could not disassociate the term 'agent' from the spies in my mystery stories. She even hinted darkly at times that the "writer's friend" type of publication is marketed by those whose luck had been similar to my own and who had decided to make a living telling others how to write. Later circumstances dissuaded her from this view.) My marriage, however, was only the beginning of the rewards writing began to cast upon my threshold in growing volume.

A different sort of reward came to me after I had been married several months. The postman, with his familiar ring, brought me one day a whole armful of my manuscripts, each accompanied by its own distinctive, individually styled, attractively colored, graciously worded rejection slip. I was digging into my wife's purse for change, he asked me about all that mail, and I explained to him that I was a writer--prolific, but unpublished. He thereupon threw the manuscripts to the floor, threw his arms around my neck and proclaimed that he too was a writer, though, alas, unpublished also. Immediately our souls were knit into that camaraderie of suffering known only to unpublished authors.

This, however, was not the best thing that came out of our deep friendship. A couple of days later he asked if he might take a few of my manuscripts home to read while they rested between rounds. And I told him, sure, go ahead, what's a fellow author for if not to read your works when nobody else will. Before long I had the answer to that little inquiry. A few weeks later, it was, I saw in a not-too-well-known magazine a story with a title, plot and characters just like one I had written except that it had my mailman's name for the by-line. Well, I soon caught on to his little game, had him hauled into court and won my case. My chief witness was the charming, kindly editor of the little magazine who admitted remembering that he rejected my story the first time it came to him, but that he published it the second time because of the revisions in it--namely, as it turned out, the change in the author's name. From this suit I received five thousand dollars damages (I later learned that the judge and the foreman of the jury were both unpublished authors), much better than if I had sold it outright. I did take the hint and use a pseudonym on my stories after that, but they all came back--postage due, two rings, different mailman.

When I finished paying my wife all I owed her for postage coming and going, and for articles, magazines, and books on how to write, I had little left of the five thousand. (My wife, incidentally, had by now become manager of the newsstand at a considerable increase in salary). Meanwhile, I continued to follow the advice of the best writers everywhere: Write! Write! Write! and Write some more! Believe me I did! I wrote stories with a message, stories with no message, stories with up-beat, on-beat, and off-beat endings; I wrote romantic and sentimental stories, and harsh and cruel and starkly realistic stories; I wrote stories of adventure and stories of lassitude. I wrote poetry and blank verse. I wrote novels of the past, present and future, about the Old South and the New. I wrote of travel and intrigue, about science-fiction and non-science fiction. I wrote novels about our newest states of Alaska (Ice Malice) and Hawaii (Pineapple Palace): I wrote a twenty-five hundred page novel about our smallest state (Dwarf). I wrote a non-fiction book about a would-be presidential candidate who was not quite all his publicity claimed for (The Faking of the President); I wrote a supposedly intimate biography of an eccentric billionaire recluse (The Man Who Never Is); I wrote a "biographical-novel" of Sigmund Freud (The Id and the Agony or: Ink Blots Keep Falling on My Head). I was completely convinced I had a sure thing when I wrote a novel exposing all the people of my home town, including my eighty-five year old mother, as evil, wicked, conniving, corrupt, and crooked (Satan Place). So sure of its success was I that I followed it with a sequel, You'd Better Not Go Home Again.

But, you guessed it. And still I kept on writing, undaunted even by my new mailman's complaints about the volume of my returned mail (he simply does not understand authors like my other one did).

Then, another break came my way. Our bare little apartment badly needed a wallpaper job in the kitchen, but the landlord refused to have it done. He did, however, generously consent to allow us to do it if we wanted to. So, my wife, who is very original, decided upon a very old idea, one that every writer (or his wife) threatens to do someday. She decided she would paper the wall

with rejection slips (I had kept them all as a token that I was a writer). This she did and had some left over which she put to good use in the bathroom: she made a nice border around the wall. The day after she finished this, the door bell rang once. It was the newspaper man. Before I could ask him which of my stories or books had been published, he told me to wipe the blase expression off my face and get my wife into the kitchen so he could take her picture in front of the rejection-slip wallpaper. She had just won three hundred dollars first prize in her decorator club's contest for original projects. This took care of a month's postage and express fees.

In case some dour soul thinks I never received any ideas from the writer's—helps type book or magazine, I want to set the record straight right now. For it is to them that I owe my greatest debt in two or three ways.

The first is, I learned that most successful writers, according to photographs in this type publication use extremely ancient and decrepit typewriters. Now I had been paying a dollar an hour to rent a new typewriter before I noticed this secret of successful writing. So, I went right out and, for twelve dollars, bought the oldest machine I could find. When I got the thing home it would not so much as type "Now is the time for all good men, etc., etc." So, I had to go to work on it. After two days I had it in good working order, and began banging out manuscripts on it with a confidence I had not had since my Muse first persuaded me to enter the writing field. Still they came back. But word got around that I was pretty handy at fixing typewriters. Even my former mailman (he has now become a constant contributor to a 'Truth'—type magazine) brought his old number over (we have become good friends again through those eternal ties of authorship) and I fixed it for him free. Soon I had to begin charging, however, and I had to cut my writing to only about six stories per week, and one novel every three months (needless to say, I quit my haberdashery job when I got married) because of the repair business. Before long I had to hire a couple of helpers, for the repair work really began piling up. Also we had to move from our cramped little apartment into a new eight room house (my wife has recently bought the newsstand also). We had no qualms about leaving our uniquely papered kitchen, for by now I again had an ample quantity of rejection slips, enough, in fact, to paper my large new den. My wife thought this would whet my incentive or my luck and get something into print. But, to no avail.

The second big turn in my fortunes came also, as I have already stated, from ideas gleaned from the "you-too-can-be-a-successful-writer" publication. While I was looking through one of these I realized that in addition to very old typewriters, successful authors also own Siamese cats. I immediately bought one. Still more rejects. Then I noticed our cat was not nearly so cross-eyed as the ones posing (and such blase poses) in the aforementioned type publication. So I bought another one, quite cross-eyed. Here my luck really changed. While looking at their eyes I had failed to pay any attention to certain other characteristics: result, one male, one female. They were not so cross-eyed, however, they didn't notice each other, all of which resulted in a lovely litter of kittens a few weeks later. The first to buy one from me was my ex-postman. The newspaper man was coming to take his picture as our town's most successful author and he wanted a Siamese, even a kitten, to complete the artistic aura befitting his success. He was not impressed with my suggestion that he maintain a blase expression for the photographer and so smiled disgustingly amateurishly. Word now spread to the other budding, blossoming, and just plain blooming authors of our town, and soon we had sold all the kittens. Before long another litter came along, and we also bought several more of the adult cats. In less than a year we have had to move into a large place in the country where our growing cat business can thrive.

The third result of my buying the numerous write-it-yourself type publication is that I now have one of the most complete "how to write" libraries in the state. At present I do a brisk business in the lending of this exclusive type literature.

I suppose some timid souls are wondering if I have given up writing. The answer is No! No! A thousand times No! As a matter of fact, I'm writing this on one of the earliest model typewriters ever manufactured in this country: one of our Siamese cats is draped on my desk: the waves outside are lapping gently. The waves? Yes, I'm aboard my yacht, and in the morning my wife, the cat, and I weigh anchor for a six months cruise while my ten hired hands take care of the typewriter repair business, the cattery, and the book lending. But writing is still my first love; I owe to it my all.

So you see, my Muse didn't lie to me. She did bring me the pleasures of self-expression, fame, and—I must admit it—money. The fame? I forgot to mention: this afternoon the local newspaper sent a man to the boat to take our picture as we were preparing to sail. I had just dropped the anchor on my foot and it was difficult to appear blase, but I think I managed. There is only one thing that irks me about that fellow from the paper. I asked him how he was going to headline the story, and he said it would be something like this: "Local Successful Businessman on Yacht Trip to Europe." I tried to explain to him that I really had achieved my successes as a writer. But when I could not name a single thing I had in print, he looked at me as though I had dropped the anchor on my head instead of on my foot and hurried ashore.

Yes, tomorrow we shall be on our way to Greece. I want to visit the native land of my Muse. I guess you could call it a pilgrimage to the shrine of my benefactor. As my yacht, *The Writer's Friend*, prepares to slip from her berth and head into the morning sunrise, only a breath of doubt disturbs my tranquillity. I have tried not to think of it in recent days, but now I can confess. There have been moments when I considered it barely possible that the voice I heard that morning so long ago in the haberdashery belonged to my boss, Mr. Nick Doulopoulous, a genial Greek gentleman. This seems unlikely, however, for he usually speaks in a deep voice, unlike that of my Muse, though it is true that when he is greatly enraged he speaks several octaves higher, almost in a feminine tone. And he did appear to be enraged that afternoon I asked off to begin my literary career. He even said something about how I had seemed to be in a daze all that morning and had not paid any attention to his orders to unpack the new merchandise that had just come in from Mt. Olympus, N.C., a small textile town in the mountains.

However that may be, I shall soon know if my calling as a writer was real or whether somewhere along the way the wires got crossed and came through the wrong operator. For though it may not be far from here to eternity, brother, it's a long way from anywhere to Mt. Olympus.

